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NOTES ON SOVIET VULNERABILITIES

Introduction

We conceive of vulnerabilities as elements of weakness in the political, economic and social system of the Soviet system which can be intensified by specific actions on our part. Such actions may, however, produce counter-actions or reactions which eliminate the weakness or even show that it did not exist in the first place.

We have previously pointed out that there are two aspects of vulnerabilities: short and long range. Short range vulnerabilities are those which normal evolution or specific directed actions may be expected to remove or at least sufficiently alleviate (e.g. housing shortage). It should be a matter of considered judgment whether or not to exploit such vulnerabilities; we could imagine cases where needling would accelerate the removal of such vulnerabilities and where the application of the principle of "letting them stew in their own juice" would be more effective.

Long range vulnerabilities are less susceptible to remedial treatment and therefore are preferable for exploitation. The problem is to determine whether, what the West would call a vulnerability, is indeed one in Communist terms. This leads us to the observation that we must be extremely careful not to misjudge the adversary by interpreting his lack of virtues, qualities, or habits - using our own terms of reference - as vulnerabilities.

Having this clearly in mind, we might add a third category of vulnerabilities: those which could develop as a result of the inherent characteristics of the "socialist" system - which may or may not now be visible or incipient. It is in this field that the knowledge of Communist ideology, organization, strategy and tactics is indispensable.

Finally, when surveying Communist vulnerabilities for purposes of exploitation, careful distinction should be made among the characteristics of the USSR, the satellite states, and the "non-aligned" countries.

SOVIET VULNERABILITIES

INTERNAL

1. Ideology

Ideology - the sum total of Communist writings and interpretations - is both the "religious" underpinning of the Communist movement and a manipulatory force used to achieve political, military and socio-economic cohesion of the "world socialist system." As such, it is vulnerable wherever its mixture of theory and practice do not coincide. It is also vulnerable to interpretive deviations either to the right (revisionism) or to the left (dogmatism). Such vulnerabilities cannot, however, be exploited by mere Free World slogans and shibboleths; to Marxists, at least, they can only be refuted in ostensibly Marxian terms. In other words, the object of exploitation of ideological discrepancies should be confusion rather than conversion. The terms and idioms of the Free World have a different meaning in the Communist realm; in counter-acting ideology, the different meaning of language must be taken into account.

2. Organization

The Communist bloc at present is not statutorily organized. Instead, it has developed, after the liquidation of the Comintern and Cominform, under the concept of the "socialist camp," the "world socialist system," and, in a more elevated form, the "socialist commonwealth." This "organization without an organization" is presumably held together by ideological principles, by common interests and common hatreds. The Bloc is a loose association of states of which the USSR is primus inter pares, but no longer holds an absolute hegemony. This creates a double vulnerability, the duration of which may, however, be limited, if steps taken to forge a new Communist world organization and to re-create centralized leadership are reasonably successful. It is difficult, however, to exploit this interim situation without driving the Communist members of the "commonwealth" closer together. Left to themselves, they may indeed drift farther apart. If, however, there should be indications of a new, tighter organization and the reinstatement of centralized leadership by the USSR, we can then renew our attack against arbitrariness and dictation.

3. The Succession

In the event of Khrushchev's demise, a period of uncertainty might follow. The designation by Khrushchev himself of a successor would be a questionable procedure and might not necessarily be implemented. Although it would be a mistake to assume that Khrushchev's demise will inevitably be followed by confusion and power struggles, at least a brief period of such may ensue. We must assume, however, that the system is well grounded; the succession struggle - provided there is one - will probably be limited to a relatively short period of time. This means that the succession period will constitute a short-range vulnerability if Soviet policy continues along Khrushchevite lines, as it well may. Should there be new trends and tendencies, particularly toward the more "leftist," "dogmatic" side, the struggle may become more protracted, in which case our chances of exploiting this vulnerability would be good for a longer period of time.

4. The Party

In the long run, the position of the Party may prove vulnerable, but this depends on unpredictable factors. Since the Party controls the machinery of the state and all propaganda media, it can shift responsibilities to organs of the state or to individuals. On the other hand, the Party is the state and its actions must be closely scrutinized by us for possible exploitation. Actual vulnerabilities may exist on regional and local levels. Moscow headquarters has not hesitated to expose shortcomings of local officials, e.g. in Kazakhstan. Such exposés may give us ammunition, but their use, as in the case of poison gas, depends on prevailing winds of the political and economic weather. Generally, it is better to attack individuals rather than the Party as an organization.

5. The Military

The reduction of forces decreed in 1959 is still likely to rankle, especially among the officers. Those released from the Army undoubtedly regret the loss of their status and privileges; the Army itself may decry the loss of manpower in spite of the sound technical and economic reasons for the cut. On the whole, there are few obvious

military vulnerabilities, suitable for present exploitation. It must never be forgotten that the Army is the instrument of the Party and that it is most unlikely to play a political role so long as the present Soviet system exists.

6. Intellectuals and Youth

We still believe that the discontent of Soviet intellectuals and youth has been overestimated in the wake of the events of 1956-57. Since then, the achievements of the USSR, mainly in the technological field (space exploration), have done much to neutralize dissent. Moreover, the improvement of living conditions and the general climate of the Khrushchev regime have almost certainly contributed to pacification of rebellious minds. Dissent, if any, is one on method rather than on the system itself which has more and more become identified with the nation.

7. Soviet Nationalities

While nationality factors have constituted vulnerabilities in the past, they are hardly acute now, except in the former Baltic states. The Soviet government has successfully overcome many of the former cleavages among the autonomous republics and national minorities, and while there may be some grumblings on the part of the Ukrainian, Georgian, and other "nationalists," we believe that these areas are now closer to the Great Russians than ever before. This also pertains to the Central Asian republics. Whether the Great Russians can be accused of "colonialism" in their own country which roughly comprises the territories under Czarist rule, is open to question. The charge may be tried in psychological warfare against the Communist system and to counteract, throughout the world, the accusations against Western "colonialism." But the two systems are not the same and propaganda on this theme would have to be careful in differentiating between them.

8. Relationship between the Regime and the People

We cannot apply Western yardsticks to measure the positive and negative elements of this relationship. The Soviet peoples have never lived under a system of democratic freedom as we understand it; it is probable that in the minds of many the Khrushchev regime has offered them

more liberties than they have had for a long time. Certainly, in comparison with the Stalin era, things have improved considerably. On the other hand, the leaders still probably lack full confidence in their people and generally continue to prevent them from obtaining such factual information and objective interpretation as would be available to Western peoples. This remains, then, a point of weakness to be exploited, provided it is done with psychological insight and finesse. It must be kept in mind that a totalitarian regime controls all instruments of power and communications and uses them effectively to impose its views and wishes. This, for us, appears to be a great vulnerability, but for the average Soviet citizen it is unquestionably an accepted fact of life.

BLOC RELATIONS

1. Sino-Soviet Relations

Relations have not been smooth between the parties of the two countries and this in itself constitutes a vulnerability. It is difficult, however, to predict, on a long range basis, whether the controversy will vitally affect Communist solidarity. We must carefully weigh the difference in relations among bloc countries and between them and the Free World. We also must review Sino-Soviet relations after the Moscow Statement of December 1960 so as to determine whether the agreements contained in this Statement are being kept by both parties. There is strong evidence that they are. We feel that it would be self-defeating to exploit the Sino-Soviet squabbles for short range purposes, overlooking the long range developments. An overt exploitation might boomerang and bring the two partners closer together; ingenious covert or limited actions could be of some use. For example, we could and should exploit the split in some CPs, such as the Indian and Indonesian parties (and apparently the French). We could play up Albania against the other satellites and vice versa. We could play up Chinese economic failures and the lack of sufficient Soviet help. We could set Peking's foreign policy against Moscow's or set Maoism against Khrushchevism, (all covert, of course.) Nevertheless, we must remain aware that the basic Sino-Soviet relationship is not only one between two states or parties, but that it affects the entire Communist movement. This is as well known

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to the Communist leaders as it is to us, and we must therefore assume that, as Communists, they will make every effort to adjust their differences of opinion. For these reasons we would advise regarding the Sino-Soviet arguments as a limited vulnerability of short range nature, the long range of which can only be determined at a later date.

2. The East European Satellites

The Kremlin under Khrushchev has made a great effort to reduce the weaknesses inherent in a satellite system. It has almost certainly made some progress in this direction. The liquidation of the upheavals in Poland and Hungary, by both peaceful and militant means, and the stabilization efforts between the end of 1956 to the 1957 Moscow Communist summit - a diplomatic feat without precedent achieved through innumerable individual meetings - have left the satellite area generally strengthened. Albania's super-radicalism is the exception, but we must be careful not to overestimate the effect of its rebellion. We cannot rule out that Peking, by adjusting to Soviet strategy, will throw Albania to the Soviet wolves. China may find it impossible to support Albania indefinitely from so far away and the Hoxha regime may fall as a result of economic destitution and Soviet empirical political intrigues.

The satellite states have been given to understand that they are "independent." Although the more extreme forms of direct Soviet domination are no longer visible, yet the satellite area remains, from the Kremlin's point of view, a vital part of its territorial security sphere. The crackdowns in East Germany in 1953 and in Hungary in 1956 have made this clear; in Poland only the realistic maneuvering of Gomulka prevented similar occurrences. Apart from Poland, the satellite governments cannot count on genuine popular support, and some party leaders are held in contempt. Nevertheless, although nationalism still exists and expresses itself in devious ways, it is only realistic to recognize that popular opposition has been decreasing, even in Hungary, probably due to the rising living standards. For these reasons, the vulnerability of the satellite area is at best a limited one. We should be aware of the fact, moreover, that the satellites for all the popular opposition to Communism are not necessarily pro-Western. Probably the overwhelming part

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of these peoples are in sympathy with some type of native Marxism. Certain it is that the Kremlin cannot fully rely on the loyalty of the peoples, and it is perhaps for this reason that it is so sensitive to Western attempts to test this loyalty.

3. The Question of Soviet Leadership in the Bloc

The fact that the USSR no longer has hegemony over the entire bloc cannot be overlooked. Although it still is in a position of leadership, as primus inter pares, due to its power and experience, it is no longer absolute and Khrushchev has repeatedly and emphatically stressed this fact. The question, therefore, arises whether an allegedly monolithic, totalitarian configuration of states can remain without a dictator and not become "leaderless." This dilemma does not necessarily lend itself to exploitation. In fact, a "socialist commonwealth," indicating a loose association of like-minded states, would appear to be less stringent and more genuinely democratic than the system of Moscow-centered "democratic centralism," hitherto governing the bloc. If we exposed the bloc as non-monolithic and lacking leadership, this would play into the hands of Red China. If we imply that Moscow still exercises absolute control we would not be telling the truth. Consequently, it may be advisable to await further developments in Sino-Soviet relations, within the context of the "socialist system," before embarking on a major campaign of exploitation.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. Yugoslavia

In the sense that Yugoslavia interrupts the chain of satellite countries constituting a cordon sanitaire both territorially and ideologically, it is a vulnerability to the USSR. But we must keep in mind that Titoism is essentially a variant of orthodoxy rather than a repudiation of it. Tito remains a Communist, even though he has reinterpreted Marxism-Leninism for Yugoslav purposes. He is much closer to the East than to the West. In trying to exploit the vulnerability which he constitutes, we must be careful not to drive the opponents nearer together, but we probably can anticipate a modicum of fluctuation in the relationship between Moscow and Belgrade, leaving open to us the opportunity of

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discreet exploitation with limited objectives. The role of China and Albania in this dialectic must be carefully weighed.

2. Soviet Foreign Policy

It is vulnerable for several reasons:

(a) It may appear to be aggressive and endangering the peace in the eyes of the bloc states, except perhaps Red China;

(b) It may appear to be too "soft" in Peking where Khrushchev's theories are not highly popular at present;

(c) It may be considered highly dangerous by non-aligned states which have retained their free faculties of political judgment and not yet fallen under the Marxist-Leninist spell.

"Peaceful coexistence" is particularly vulnerable outside the Bloc because the dialectics of "peace" and a "continuing ideological struggle" are not appreciated. In fact, a case can be made that the Communist bloc does not want genuine peace but only temporary accommodation to preserve its progress toward "transition to Communism." The Berlin crisis, engendered by Moscow, does not fit into the "peacefulness" of "coexistence"; the Soviet arms deliveries to Laos contradict it and the refusal to compromise on the nuclear test ban makes a mockery of it. The attacks against the United Nations Secretariat and the attempt to impose a veto system through the triple-headed monster "troika" are highly vulnerable to non-Communist attacks. The contradictions between words and deeds are clearly exploitable. So is the nuclear and missile rattling in the background of political and economic encroachment, regardless of the fact that Khrushchev almost certainly does not want war, either general or local. Indeed, a large-scale Western peace campaign against Communist disturbing the peace would be well timed and well grounded. Fundamentally, it must not be forgotten, that Soviet foreign policy is an international Communist foreign policy, whose ultimate objective is the creation of a Communist world state.

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THE SOVIET ECONOMY

The Soviet economy is obviously powerful and dynamic. Its growth rate - a matter of "numbers gamesmanship" among experts and laymen - is probably at least double ours, and, President Kennedy to the contrary notwithstanding, its prospects for catching up with our industrial production, absolute if not per capita, by 1970, are good. The chances that we can slow down its impetus by any action we might undertake are considerably less than that we can speed up our own.

The Communists, of course, claim that, being scientific in rationale, and based on planning, the Soviet economy is invulnerable. We have learned enough to shy away from earlier crude statements that a socialist economy cannot flourish because its planning principle destroys the basic incentive which characterizes the private enterprise system. We are not yet, as a nation, prepared to admit that a greater measure of planning may be necessary if our own, to some extent "mixed" type of economy, is to flourish.

In spite of our relative powerlessness to do anything but try to "outcompete," we can hope that some of the problems confronting the Soviet economy may in time prove difficult or intractable, and even emerge as serious vulnerabilities. These may be considered under the following headings:

1. Institutional Factors

a. The planning mechanism itself has a built-in "contradiction" between the central and local factors. This has been tinkered with ever since 1957 with the organization of the sovnarkhoz structure, of more than a hundred units. That this degree of decentralization is too great, is shown by the recent creation of some 16 economic regions, not exactly overlapping the Republic units. The problem of balancing overall planning with flexibility in detail and execution will grow in difficulty as the economy progresses. But at the same time, new and powerful tools are coming to hand, especially linear programming. The Party is fully aware of the internal conflicts which arise between it and the functional, administrative and technological hierarchies, and

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is constantly seeking new adjustment. It is hard to see what we can do to hamper its efforts and induce confusion, but we should study this matter closely and objectively, if for nothing else to see what lessons we can learn.

b. The problem of pricing is thorny for the planned "socialist" economies. Among its many highly technical aspects, one may single out the practice of under-pricing new products, in effect discounting the economies which are to be achieved in later mass production, and creating a handicap to enterprising plant managers. The emphasis has been shifted from overfulfillment of gross plan to cost reduction as the basis of the managerial bonus. In general, the whole problem of price and the "market economy" has been the subject of lively professional soul searching, in which a surprising freedom of discussion has been allowed, if not encouraged. Whether this will end in scrapping certain basic ideological concepts remains to be seen, and we should be prepared for some measure of convergence in both the capitalist and the Communist developments. This is of special interest to us, in view of the rise of "administered prices."

c. The problem of research and development has troubled the Party and Government leaders. Like ourselves, the Soviet planners have not fully solved such matters as basic and applied research, the role of central academic work and the individual enterprises. There appears to be a considerable gap between military and civilian R and D, to the disadvantage of the latter. Since the Party recognizes that technology is the key to the massive development of the material base which underlies the "transition to Communism," it is devoting every effort to reconciling the contradictions of organization which constantly arise. New coordinating committees and commissions are being created in the Government and academic structure, and new and more energetic persons are being brought to the top. We will have to compete strenuously to maintain such technological lead as we may still have.

2. Investment Priorities

In the past, heavy industry and producers goods have had a clear priority over light industry and consumer goods. Khrushchev has

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indicated that these are to be equalized. It is not clear exactly what is to be done about this, and one may even doubt whether it will actually take place. At any rate it opens a host of problems, including psychological and political. If, in fact, the consumer is to be "given a break" on the scale implied by recent pronouncements, this will introduce new elements into the "transition to Communism" which can hardly be fully planned in advance. It is likely to create serious strains and frictions with the Chinese Communists, still in the "have not" stage. It may also intensify what some observers regard as an "erosion of revolutionary fervor" in Soviet society. Nevertheless it would be premature, and possibly wishful, to conclude that the USSR cannot accomplish a massive lift in the level of consumer gratification and still sustain its military program and its campaign of economic development to backward countries.

3. Labor

It has often been asserted that the USSR, facing a short range decline in the increase of the labor force, resulting from the lowered birthrate during World War II, will turn into a serious labor shortage, which will slow its rapid industrial growth. This view is generally no longer held by experts. The medium range prospects are rather for a sufficient increase to enable goals of labor productivity and actual production to be met under the Seven Year Plan. The long range prospects, 1970 and beyond, are even better for the USSR. Whether it will stabilize the work week at the American or European level - virtually attained already - or start moving toward the drastic reductions proclaimed as a feature of the "transition to Communism" remains to be seen. Much depends on the success in overcoming the shockingly low level of labor productivity in agriculture (see below). At any rate, what with the rising level of technical education, the quality of the labor force should improve, and the likelihood that manpower, as such, will prove a major vulnerability of the Soviet economy seems small.

4. Automation

Under this broad rubric, ranging from mathematical theory, through linear programming to a series of 81 major experimental enterprises, the USSR is making impressive strides. At the same time, the program appears to be balanced, rather than crashy. It is trying to avoid the

mistakes of haste which characterized the Sixth Five Year Plan. The theory and techniques of automation are more and more the subject of international exchange and cross fertilization. It is possible that the USSR is developing secret programs which will give us a Sputnik-like surprise. In any case, it seems unlikely that we can deflect them, and can at best hope to hold our own in the competition.

5. Consumer Goods

As noted above, this is an imponderable in the future prospects of the Soviet economy. Steps have been introduced, which if carried to their logical conclusion, would make the consumer "king" as he is in this country - supermarkets, frozen fruit juices, "Wheaties - sugar coated yet!", appliances and gadgets have been promised and in part already delivered. Quality and appearance rather than sheer bulk are becoming important criteria, and even stepped-up television advertising is being used. On the other hand, all this can be turned off, or at least down, if the Party finds it necessary. Khrushchev has vowed that the USSR will never go the way of the US, an anarchy of private cars, but that motor pools and car rentals will be the rule. It remains to be seen whether these fine sumptuary principles can be maintained in the face of the "revolution of rising expectations." Here is indeed a vulnerability. If we could only make them more like ourselves, in the image of Madison Avenue!

6. Agriculture

This remains the Achilles heel, but will it always be vulnerable? One can only speculate. The disproportion between US and Soviet labor productivity in agriculture is the sharpest bone in Khrushchev's throat, and like the Berlin bone, it must at all costs be removed. Factors of soil and climate, and the deep-rooted peasant possessiveness - the private plot - are solid and stubborn realities. But there is always the possibility of doing something about the situation, especially the allocation of investment capital to farm machinery and fertilizer on a realistic scale. This will undoubtedly come, the question is whether sooner or later. This determination may ultimately be made on a purely personal basis by Khrushchev himself, or it may emerge from the inexorable pressures of the billion mouths of the "world socialist system"

which have to be fed. It is a question whether activities of the type of Mr. Garst's constitute an effective exploitation of a vulnerability or the opposite. Communist China will pose an even greater question, as it becomes clearer whether its present agricultural crisis is built-in, or is a transient phenomenon which more temperate management and a break in the weather can resolve. We need to study this with close attention.